

## Arms Outstretched, God Lovingly Calls us

2<sup>nd</sup> Sun. After Pent. – 06/19/2022 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: Isaiah 65:1-9 Pastor Keith Besel

v. 1, [The LORD said,] **“I was ready to be sought by those who did not ask for Me; I was ready to be found by those who did not seek Me. I said, ‘Here am I, here am I,’ to a nation that was not called by My name.”**

### **Introduction**

- ⊗ Have you ever asked someone a big question, knowing full well that the answer you receive will either break your heart or fill you with great joy? At times like this, love hangs in the balance.
  - ➔ Standing there in the front door, dripping mud head to toe, the eight-year-old boy can't look his father in the eye. “I told you not to do that,” Dad scolds. Then he pauses, “I still love you. Do you love me?”
  - ➔ A young man whispers, “I love you”. A young woman opens the little box and her eye catches the diamond's sparkle. He pops the question: “Will you marry me?”
  - ➔ Jack confronts Jim. “You lied to Julie about me, which is unacceptable ... but I still want to be your friend. What about you? Can we work this out?”
  - ➔ The old man's gnarled fingers grasp his daughter's hand with surprising strength. “This time, they tell me that I'm going to die. Promise me please, will you never let go of Jesus?”
- ⊗ These kinds of questions change lives. The answer will be either a heartbreaker or it will let love fly.
  - ➔ In today's Old Testament Reading, God calls out with love's urgency. Make or break! Will you hear God and be made whole? Or, rejecting Him, will you stay broken and break God's heart?

### **I. God Reaches Out to a Nation Not Called by His Name**

- ⊗ Through His prophet Isaiah, God cries out in verse one, “I said, ‘Here I am, here I am,’ to a nation that was not called by My name” (v 1). Do you hear God's passion? He wants to be asked, sought and found. Again and again, He actively calls out to those who did not ask or seek Him.
  - ➔ So, who is this nation that God so graciously invites? It was soon after God brought the Jews out of Egypt, through the Red Sea, that He told them they were His “chosen people”; attached to Him and His name. In Deuteronomy 7:6-8 Yahweh said, “For you are a people holy to Yahweh your God. Yahweh your God has chosen you to be a people for His treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. ...it is because Yahweh loves you and is keeping the oath that He swore to your fathers...”.
  - ➔ That was some 700-800 years before Isaiah here in our text today. So this is NOT Israel; the Jews that God is talking about in verse one. They already have the name of Yahweh upon them.
- ⊗ Who is it then that God is referring to? What nation is He saying He eagerly reaches out to and desires to connect to with His saving name?
  - ➔ We have to wait some 700 years, until the time of Paul in the New Testament letter that he writes to the Romans to get a definitive answer to that question. In Romans 10:20-21, Paul marvels at God's grace; that He would really reach out to and call the pagan Gentile nations to turn away from their false gods and receive Him and His gracious love for them? Paul refers to

our text in Isaiah and says, “Isaiah is so bold as to [speak for Yahweh], ‘I have been found by those who did not seek Me; I have shown Myself to those who did not ask for Me’.” And then Paul says that God even confronts the people of Israel as well and says, “All day long I have held out My hands to a disobedient and contrary people” (Rom. 10:20–21).

→ So in the end it is not “a” nation that God wants to seek after Him and be found by Him. It is “all” the nations; the “Goyim” (גוֹיִם), which is the Hebrew word that we know in English as “the Gentiles” – all other “nations” besides the Jews.

→ So this applies to every one of us here today, wherever your ethnic heritage and genes may lead. My roots are connected to Germany and Sweden – primarily Lutheran nations 500 or so years ago yes, but originally they worshiped trees and thunder in Germany and the Swedes followed the Old Norse religion with many gods and goddesses connected to mythology.

✘ So, my blood people did not know God; they had not sought God. And as for our nation here today – America, our nation’s primary religion seeks after and worships freedom, progress, and prosperity. What’s wrong with that? Can they really be our god? Well, when trouble comes, where do most Americans turn? To family and friends; believing in our own hard work or good looks or money to buy the answer?

→ Look, Scripture is clear about this; none of us was asking for or seeking God when He first called to us. I know that I was a helpless baby when God generously reached out and adopted me in Baptism; where He gave me (and you) His name. Now we Christians are His new nation – all who call on the name of Jesus!

## II. God Justly Threatens those He Reaches Out to in Love

✘ But whether we are Jews or Gentiles, God’s Word takes a quick turn in verses two and three, “I spread out My hands all the day to a rebellious people, who walk in a way that is not good, following their own devices; a people who provoke Me to My face continually...”.

→ There lies the “root” problem with Isaiah’s people; with all people: our rebellious heart! They/we rebel against God and follow our own foolish devices. And just like the people of Israel, we too put ourselves at great risk of turning away and becoming lost. This breaks God’s heart!

→ Isaiah lists some of the specific “fruit” or evidence of Israel’s “root” problem. They worship nature, “sacrificing in gardens” rather than at God’s house according to verse three. They crafted manmade bricks for altars rather than the stones God directed them to use. They actually sit in tombs, seeking oracles from the dead; spending the night in secret places, as if their dreams will bring news instead of God! And all the while these people imagine themselves, as verse five says, to be “too holy for you”. This is the old “Holier than Thou” syndrome. They actually believe they know better than God what is right and good for their lives and families.

✘ All I’ll say to this is each one of us needs to take a good look in the mirror and ask when and where and how we all do this very thing. If you think you’re innocent, just ask, “What law does God give in Scripture, that I think or say, ‘Oh, that doesn’t apply to me’?” Or, “that was then, but now in our day, we know better”.

✘ As we said, God has called us by His name, christened us to be Christians! Do our lives show the world that “we are worthy of Christ’s name”? Or do our lives betray our heart and provoke God?

→ This is what God is doing here through Isaiah, justly threatening His people, including us, when we get too comfortable and cozy in our sin.

→ Why? Because He is desperate to call us back to Himself where we can live in His forgiveness and thrive in His grace!

### III. God in mercy stretched out His Arms

✘ In verses eight and nine, Yahweh uses the illustration of new wine in the vineyard to express His enduring love and mercy for us all. It's the picture of a landowner who came to his beautiful vineyard. Quite the idealist, he invested a great deal in developing a gorgeous property. He built protective walls. He cleared and turned the soil. He planted the choicest vines. He patiently fertilized and watered every root, painstakingly pruning each branch. Now the harvesters' joyful songs echo across the vineyard. At last they are bringing home the luscious fruit.

→ But then, a terrible cry stabs the owner's heart. A harvester screams, "This cluster has gone sour. It's all spoiled!" But the chorus of harvesters sings back, "Do not destroy it. The master himself put his blessing in those grapes. We can still salvage the good fruit! Such fruitful harvest remains and we will yet celebrate with delicious new wine!"

→ God says in verse eight, "So I will do for My servants' sake, and not destroy them all". This is God's unending love and mercy for all who have His name.

✘ Today on Father's Day, I think of how a loving, godly father reacts to his children when they rebel against him and disobey. Even when he knows that he must respond to their sin with threatening words and dole out punishment, it does NOT deter the father's love for his children in the slightest. Hebrews 11:6 even says, "the Lord disciplines the one He loves".

→ So it is with our fathers here on earth; with us who are fathers seeking out and desiring always a close relationship with our children, because that is what our heavenly Father has taught us in His love for us.

→ It doesn't matter the stage of life; whether our children are still young, in High School or college or are grown adults with children of their own, Christian fathers "spread out [their] hands all the day", even to their "rebellious" children.

→ Why? for the same reason that Yahweh reaches out to all of us in our rebellion and sin. Because it breaks His heart to see His children turn away and put their place with Him in eternity at risk.

✘ This is why God, our Father sent Jesus here; to take the punishment that we could not endure; to make the sacrifice on the cross that was impossible for any of us to make; to reach out His arms of mercy to be pierced and attached to the cross in His immeasurable and unending love for us all!

→ Yes, it's because of that love that God reaches out to you, my dear friends, every single day; all day and forever! So rejoice dear people of God; rejoice in the wonder and joy of His loving embrace. Amen.